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TAGS: PREL MOPS KPKO SO ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA FRUSTRATED BY IGAD, BUT NOT DETERRED

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

**¶11. (S/NF)** Summary. Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin on November 7 told the Ambassador that the status quo in Somalia was hopeless, and that bringing Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia/Djibouti (ARS) head Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and his faction into the government would increase support for the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) on the ground. Seyoum emphasized that Ethiopia must leave Somalia soon. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told the Ambassador on November 8 that TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf was no longer a viable leader for the TFG, and that if the TFG did not make sufficient progress in the next two months, Ethiopia will push for leadership changes within the TFG. Ethiopian Special Envoy to Somalia Abdetta Dribssa told EmbOffs on November 6 that if Washington wanted to keep President Yusuf in place through the InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit in Nairobi, then Washington should figure out how to deal with him because the Ethiopian government was finished with him. TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah told the Ambassador on November 7 that the Ethiopian government was angry with Washington and UN Special Representative for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah for disrupting Ethiopia's plans for the October 27-29 IGAD summit in Nairobi. He said Ethiopia had hoped to gain IGAD's blessing for a new unity TFG-ARS/Djibouti government, but instead the summit produced a piece of paper that would not be honored by the TFG. Farah said Ethiopia's "plan B" was to force Yusuf out as part of the establishment of the unity government over the course of the next few months, and that negotiations were underway between ARS/Djibouti leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Ethiopia, and between the TFG and ARS/Djibouti representatives regarding the formation of a unity government. End Summary.

Seyoum: "The Status Quo in Somalia is Hopeless"

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**¶12. (S/NF)** On November 7, Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Minister Seyoum Mesfin told the Ambassador and PolOff that without the commitment by IGAD at the summit to establish a formal monitoring mechanism of the TFG, and agreement to meet regularly, Ethiopia would have withdrawn from Somalia immediately following the summit. At the same time, Seyoum complained that the summit produced a "most optimistic" document that he did not believe the TFG would adhere to. Seyoum noted that in the previous two years he had visited Somalia 12 times, during announced and unannounced visits, where the leadership always agreed to do something, but never actually followed through. He queried rhetorically, "how many times do we have to go through this?" Seyoum said TFG

Prime Minister Nur Adde was currently in London to present his proposed new government to Yusuf, but Seyoum was confident Yusuf would reject it. Seyoum predicted that after they are unable to agree in London, Yusuf and Nur Adde would have to come to Addis Ababa or go to Baidoa where Ethiopia would again have to intervene. He went on to note that whenever the two leaders go to Baidoa, the parliament members rush there because "it is like a market" where votes are for sale. Seyoum asked how is it that Yusuf never has money to pay TFG troops, but always has money to corrupt parliament members? (Note: Somali press as of November 10 report that Yusuf did, in fact, reject Nur Adde's proposed cabinet list. The IGAD CommuniquO signed on October 29 required that the TFG appoint a cabinet within 15 days. The TFG has been without a full cabinet since early August. End Note.)

Seyoum: A Representative Government is Critical

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¶3. (S/NF) Establishing a government that enjoys actual representation on the ground was critical for political progress in Somalia, asserted Seyoum. He said Yusuf was a guest in a Hawiye town (Mogadishu), and that Yusuf was a barrier to Hawiye reconciliation (i.e. between the Abgal and Habir Gedir). Seyoum noted that the people of Somalia wanted the violence to end, but their government was denying them peace. When queried what role Ethiopia saw for ARS/Djibouti head Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in a unity government, and whether Sharif might increase Somali support for the TFG, Seyoum responded that "all options must be kept open" including Sharif as prime minister or president. He said

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bringing Sharif into the government brings the Hawiye/Abgal and the Hawiye/Hawadle into the process, and isolates al-Shabaab from the mainstream Hawiye. Seyoum also thought that a unity government would signal to the TFG that business as usual could not continue, and force them to change how they operate, to compete for the people's support, or they would lose out. He added that bringing Sharif into the government would not make the TFG suddenly function, but it would be a step in the right direction. He emphasized that there were only nine months left in the transition period, and "the TFG as it stands has failed."

Seyoum: "We Must Leave Somalia"

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¶4. (S/NF) Seyoum explained that his government was under increasing domestic pressure to withdraw from Somalia. He said this issue was being raised everywhere and people were asking, "are we in a quagmire?" and "what is Ethiopia's plan to get out?" Seyoum emphasized that the Ethiopian military was doing an excellent job, but added that Chief of Defense General Samora told Prime Minister Meles that there was no reason to continue in Somalia because the military could perform its mission from Ethiopia's side of the border. Samora also told Meles that he could continue in Somalia indefinitely, but that it would come at considerable cost. Seyoum added that the deployment had become too expensive. He said his government, which was already experiencing a severe hard currency shortage, was forced to pay for supplies in Somalia in dollars. He complained that everything, including bottled water, was more expensive in Somalia than in Ethiopia. Seyoum underscored that if people thought Ethiopia would stay in Somalia indefinitely, or that Ethiopia was "stuck" in Somalia, they were wrong.

Tekeda: "Yusuf is No Longer a Viable Leader"

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¶5. (S/NF) Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told the Ambassador on November 8 that while on the one hand the Ethiopians were "pleased" with the reaffirmation of the Djibouti and Addis accords at the IGAD summit in Nairobi, the bottom line was that Yusuf was no

longer a viable person to lead the TFG. In 15 days, Yusuf must have a cabinet in place under the IGAD agreement. If not, then Seyoum will call a meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers. At that time, Ethiopia will insist on changes within the TFG. Tekeda said in London, where both Nur Adde and Yusuf are for medical check-ups, Yusuf ignored Nur Adde, and continues to do whatever needs to be done to stay in power.

Abdetta: "You Wanted Yusuf, You Deal With Him"

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¶6. (S/NF) Ethiopian Special Envoy to Somalia Abdetta Dribssa, who attended the summit, told EmbOffs on November 6 that the TFG leadership was not replaced at the summit because "Washington said no," and the Kenyan government did not want Nairobi, the TFG's birthplace, to be where the TFG was "dismantled." When queried how one might move forward in light of IGAD's decision to keep TFG President Yusuf in place, Abdetta, clearly annoyed, shot back, "you wanted Yusuf, you deal with him." He went on to say that if Washington was so keen on Yusuf, Washington should figure out how to work with him. Abdetta said Yusuf was an impediment to the formation of a unity government between the TFG and Sheikh Sharif's ARS/Djibouti faction. He explained that Yusuf, who was desperate to replace Prime Minister Nur Adde, would accept Sharif as TFG prime minister. On the other hand, Abdetta said Sharif did not want to join the TFG while Yusuf remained president because Sharif would lose all credibility having "allied" himself with Yusuf, the one person all Hawiye clansmen hate.

¶7. (S/NF) Abdetta stated that as part of the IGAD process, the IGAD Council of Ministers would meet every two months and reassess the TFG's progress. IGAD would also appoint a facilitator to monitor the TFG's implementation of its agreements and submit progress reports back to IGAD. He could not predict what IGAD would do at the next meeting, but he did not believe Yusuf and Nur Adde would make any progress in the next two months. He said the first test would be

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whether the two leaders would be able to form a new cabinet as called for in the agreement they signed with IGAD during the summit. He said if Yusuf continues to resist the formation of a new government, it would not bode well for the TFG. IGAD at the next meeting, he said, could decide to change the TFG leadership, or pull AMISOM out of Mogadishu, or do something else entirely. He noted that IGAD and the Ethiopian government would make a collective decision to withdraw from Mogadishu, and that the Ethiopian military and AMISOM would leave together. Abdetta clearly intimated that Ethiopia would not pull its troops from Somalia before the next IGAD Ministerial in two months.

Farah: Ethiopia "Furious" With Washington and Ould-Abdallah

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¶8. (S/NF) Separately, TFG Ambassador Abdi Karin Farah told the Ambassador and PolOff on November 7 that the Ethiopian government was "furious" with Washington and UN Special Representative for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah for disrupting their plans for the IGAD summit. Farah, who attended the summit and who has acted as an interlocutor between the Ethiopian government and Sheikh Sharif, said that on the eve of the summit Ethiopia had a plane ready to fly Sharif to Addis Ababa to come to an agreement regarding the formation of a unity government in which Sharif would become prime minister. Ethiopia had hoped to emerge from the summit with IGAD's blessing on the unity government. However, when Ethiopia understood that Washington did not want any leadership changes, and when Ould-Abdallah called a TFG/ARS meeting in Djibouti immediately prior to the summit, the Ethiopians were forced to scrap their plans. Farah said the Ethiopian government walked into the summit with no "plan B."

¶ 9. (S/NF) Farah said Ethiopia was continuing with its push for a unity government that would ultimately exclude Yusuf. He said Ethiopia had sent Sharif back into Somalia immediately following the summit so that Sharif could "sell" the idea of a unity government to Sharif's people on the ground. Farah, a Hawiye from Beledweyne, noted that Sharif had spent the night in Farah's home. From Beledweyne, Ethiopia planned to fly Sharif to Djibouti on November 8 where Sharif would meet with ARS colleagues from all over the region to gain additional support for the merger. Farah noted that in the week following the summit there had been little fighting because Sharif had told his supporters on the ground to cease attacks against Ethiopia and the TFG. Farah said Sharif told his people that he had "cut a deal" with the Ethiopians, and the Ethiopians would be leaving Somalia soon.

¶ 10. (S/NF) Farah stated that negotiations were underway between representatives from the TFG and ARS/Djibouti regarding how many seats ARS/Djibouti would receive in the expanded unity government parliament. He said Ould-Abdallah was involved in those negotiations, but the Ethiopians were behind the scenes working the issue. Ethiopia initially offered to increase the size of the parliament by 75 seats to be given to the ARS, but the ARS delegation rejected 75 as too low. Farah said that the offer had increased to 125 expanded seats, but the ARS was continuing to hold out for more positions. Farah estimated it would take two to three months to establish the unity government; it would take time for the TFG and the ARS/Djibouti to come to an agreement over parliamentary seats and cabinet positions. Then both sides would have to sell the deal to their constituencies, IGAD, and the international community.

¶ 11. (S/NF) Yusuf would accept Sharif as prime minister, according to Farah. Farah said Yusuf had been talking by telephone to Sharif's people, and Yusuf was hoping to use Sharif and the unity government to get rid of Nur Adde and his supporters. Farah said most TFG parliament members were disappointed with the IGAD summit as they hoped to see Yusuf removed. Once the parliament returns to Baidoa, they could still move to impeach the president on their own--a point re-echoed by Abdetta. He added that the parliament members were also angry with the results of the summit because although they were called to Nairobi, they were not allowed to speak or act. However, Farah said, the Ethiopians might be able to convince the parliament to accept the unity

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government, and the "reconciliation process," as a mechanism to remove Yusuf without impeachment.

Comment

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¶ 12. (S/NF) The objective of the Ethiopian government's desire for a representative TFG is to create conditions in Somalia that would allow the Ethiopian military to withdraw without creating a security vacuum where extremists could take control of central and southern Somalia. As Prime Minister Meles told EmbOffs on November 6 (Septel), Ethiopia can live with terrorists in Somalia, but not a Somalia run by terrorists. They believe that by gaining Hawiye/Abgal buy-in, they can at a minimum keep the extremists from gaining ground in central Somalia, and thereby establish some territorial "breathing space" near the Ethiopian border. As a result, the Ethiopian government now sees President Yusuf as the primary obstacle to their objective, and Washington should expect that Ethiopia will not stop until he is removed from office. Although Ethiopia is determined to leave Somalia as soon as possible, their commitment to obtain IGAD's blessing for a withdrawal that would include AMISOM at the same time suggests that the Ethiopian military will remain in Somalia into the new year. End Comment.

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